

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-10 IO-10 /097 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7771

UNCLAS MEXICO 4225

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US

SUBJECT: REACTION TO AMAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

1. MOST MEXICO CITY NEWSPAPERS GAVE LEAD TREATMENT TO MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT IN MAY 15 EDITIONS. REPORTS, BASED ON WIRE SERVICE DESPATCHES, WERE MOSTLY PLAYED STRAIGHT ALTHOUGH HEADLINE WRITERS GAVE REIN TO USUAL EDITORIAL BIASES TO CONVEY MORE OR LESS UNFAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF U.S. ACTION (E.G., INFLUENTIAL MODERATE-LEFT EXCELSIOR SUGGESTED MILITARY ACTIONS OCCURRED AFTER PHNOM PENH HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED IT WAS FREEING MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW; LEFT-LEANING UNIVERSAL SAID MARINES WERE "CONTINUING TO FIGHT" IN CAMBODIA; AND EXTREME-LEFT EL DIA TRUMPED "HEAVY MILITARY LOSSES" BY U.S.).

2. EDITORIALS REFLECTED PREDICTABLE IDEOLOGICAL SPREAD, ALTHOUGH ALL EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT INCIDENT MIGHT HAVE LED TO SERIOUS NEW MILITARY HOSTILITIES IN INDOCHINA.

--EXCELSIOR: WASHINGTON'S REACTION WAS SEEMINGLY OUT OF PROPORTION, SINCE IT DID NOT WAIT TO SEE WHETHER THE SAME RESULT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED BY NEGOTIATIONS. U.S. APPEARED TO BE LOOKING FOR A PRETEXT TO REIMPOSE ITS POWER IN INDOCHINA. STRANGE THAT MAYAGUEZ WAS NOT WARNED TO STAY AWAY FROM ZONE IN WHICH OTHER SHIPS HAD ALREADY RUN INTO TROUBLE. U.S. REACTION UNDERSTANDABLE, SINCE ITS PRIDE HAD BEEN WOUNDED AND THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY

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TO REPLY FORCEFULLY. BUT IT IGNORED THE DANGER THAT THIS

MIGHT LEAD TO EVEN GREATER CONFLICT.

--HERALDO (CONSERVATIVE): INCIDENT CLOUDED THE HORIZON WITH POSSIBILITY OF NEW CONFLAGRATION AND SHOWED HOW PRECARIOUS PEACE IS IN INDOCHINA. AREA'S ANCIENT PROBLEMS HAVE NOT BEEN RESOLVED AND TENSIONS SEEM TO GROW DAILY. URGENT THAT GREAT POWERS MODIFY THEIR ATTITUDES RADICALLY AND THAT BOTH U.S. AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FIND MORE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF DIALOGUE, OF A SORT WHICH DOES NOT MERELY HIDE UNRESTRAINED IMPERIALIST AIMS. HOPEFULLY, INCIDENT WILL INCLINE THEM TO CHANNEL FUTURE DISPUTES INTO DIPLOMATIC HANNELS, RATHER THAN RESORT TO FORCEFUL MEASURES WHEN THEY FEEL THEIR INTERESTS ARE VIOLATED.

--NOVEDADES (CENTRIST): WORLD HAS JUST PASSED THROUGH ONE OF GREATEST DANGERS IN RECENT YEARS. INCIDENT COULD HAVE UNLEASHED A NEW MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SEA--AS U.S. PRESIDENT PLAINLY INTERVENTION IN SEA--AS U.S. PRESIDENT PLAINLY THREATENED. MINOR INCIDENTS OF THIS SORT HAVE OFTEN LED TO TERRIBLE CONFLICTS IN PAST; LUCKILY THIS ONE DID NOT. WHETHER CAMBODIA OR WASHINGTON WAS RIGHT IN THIS CASE, ONLY HISTORY WILL TELL.

3. GOVERNMENT-LINING PAPERS GENERALLY REFRAINED FROM EDITORIAL COMMENT (SO FAR).

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